

ملخص

## صورة الإسلام والمسلمين في الأعمال المسرحية للكاتبين وليام شكسبير وكريستوفر مارلو



د. بثينة أحمد أبوالمجد \*

هدف هذا البحث هو تنقية صورة الإسلام في الغرب من أي مضاهيم خاطئة، حيث يتناول بعضاً من الأعمال في الأدب الإنجليزي وبخاصة مسرحيات مختارة للكاتبين البريطانيين وليام شكسبير وكريستوفر مارلو اللذين عاشا في عصر الملكة اليزابيث الأولى، ويهدف إظهار الطريقة التي تناول بها الكاتبان الإسلام والمسلمين في تلك الأعمال. والغرض من الدراسة هو كشف الادعاءات المفوضة التي لا أساس لها والتعصب ضد الإسلام.

وقد ظهر في الغرب خلال ما يزيد عن ثلاثة عشر قرناً من الزمان الكثير من الكتابات عن الإسلام وسوف يظهر الكثير بدون شك. فقد أدت أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر ٢٠٠١ وما تلاها من حرب ضد ما يسمى بالإرهاب في أفغانستان إلى حديث مغلوط في الغرب عن الإسلام وغالباً ما تركز هذا الحديث حول أفكار شكلتها حواجز عرقية ودينية وثقافية.

يتبع هذا البحث مفهوم الغرب عن الإسلام والمسلمين عبر التاريخ حتى القرون الوسطى، كاشفاً الأسباب والادعاءات الثقافية والتاريخية التي شكلت هذا المفهوم. وبفحص الأعمال المسرحية للكاتبين شكسبير ومارلو سوف تظهر الدراسة حقيقة هي: كيف أثرت الثقافة والادعاءات الكاذبة الموروثة في الصورة التي قدمها الكاتبان عن الإسلام والمسلمين.

• أستاذ مساعد الأدب الإنجليزي كلية الدراسات الإنسانية - جامعة الأزهر.

•• ألقى هذا البحث في مؤتمر بجامعة الأزهر في مايو ٢٠٠٢ عن الدراسات الإنسانية وقيم التعددية والتسامح في الإسلام.

Falk, Richard: "False Universalism and Geopolitics of Exclusion: The Case of Islam". *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1997): 7-23.

Gallaghan, Dympna. "What's at Stake in Renaissance Race? " *Shakespeare studies*, Vol. 26, ed. Leeds Barroll, London: Associated Univ. Press (1998) : 21-26.

#### **4. Other Sources**

The Qur'an

القرآن الكريم

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Sanders, Wilbur. *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1968.

Smith, Bryan P. *Islam in English Literature*, Beirut: The American press, 1939.

Scott, M.W. and Williamson, S.L. ed. *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 6. Michigan, Detroit: Gale Research, Book Tower, 1984.

Trudeau, Lawrence J. ed. *Drama Criticism*. Vol. I. Detroit, London: Gale Research Inc., 1991.

Tryeman, Christopher. *England and the Crusades 1095-1588*. Chicago: Univ. Press, 1988.

Tydeman, W. and Thomas V. *Christopher Marlowe*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989.

Wilson, F.P. *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

### **3. Articles in Periodicals**

Carroll, W.C. "Language, Politics, and Poverty in Shakespearean Drama". *Shakespeare Survey*. Vol. 44 (1992) : 17-24.

Erickson, Peter. "The Moment of Race in Renaissance Studies". *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 26, ed. Leeds Barroll, London: Fairleigh Dickenson and London Associated Univ. Presses (1998): 27-36.

- Cowhig, Ruth. *The Black Presence in English Literature*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1985.
- D'Amico, Jack. *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*. Florida: the Univ. of South Florida Press, 1991.
- Davutoglu, Ahmet. *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World*. Kuala Lumpur: Mahir Publications, 1994.
- Ellis-Fermor, U. *Christopher Marlowe*. Hamedon: Archeon Books, 1967.
- Geckle, G.L. *Tamburlaine and Edward II*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1988.
- Gunny, Ahmad. *Images of Islam in Eighteenth-Century Writings*, London: Grey seal, 1996.
- Haneef, Suzanne. *What Everyone Should know about Islam and Muslims*. Chicago.: Kazi Publications, 1995.
- Kilvert, Ian S. ed. *British Writers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979.
- Lyon, John. *Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988.
- Pearsall, Derek. *The Canterbury Tales*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Poland, Alfred W. ed. *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: The Prologue*. London: Mcmillan, 1969.
- Ribner, I. *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.
- Rowse, A.L. *Christopher Marlowe*. London: Mcmillian, 1964.

Ure, P. ed. *King Richard II*. London: Methuen, 1961.

ii. Other editions

Kernan, A. ed. *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice*. The Signet Classic, New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Sanders, N. ed. *Othello*. Cambridge: University Press, 1984.

Shakespeare, W. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. London: Murrays Sale & Services Co., 1973.

**b. Works by Christopher Marlowe**

Ellis-Fermor, U. ed. *Tamburlaine the Great*. London:

Methuen, 1930.

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966.

**2. Secondary Sources**

Barroll, Leeds, ed. *Shakespeare Studies* Vol. 26. London: Associated Univ. Press, 1998.

Barthelemy . Anthony G. ed. *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's "Othello"* New York: Maxwell, 1994.

Boas, F.S. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Oxford : The Clarenton Press, 1955.

Calderwood, James L. *The Properties of Othello*. Massachusetts: Univ. Press, 1989.

Chew, Samuel C. *The Crescent, and the Rose*. New York : Octagon Books, 1965.

## **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>The fact that Othello was a baptized Christian is made explicit from the beginning when he quells the drunken broil with the words: "For Christian shame/ Put by this barbarous brawl" (II. iii. 172).

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to Ellis-Fermor's Arden edition of the play for a study of these chroniclers and their contribution to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*.

## **WORKS CITED**

### **I. Primary Sources**

#### **a. Works by William Shakespeare**

Edition Used:

##### **i. The New Arden Edition:**

Hammond, A. ed. *King Richard III*. London: Methuen, 1981.

Honigmann, E.A. J. ed. *Othello*. London: Methuen, 1997.

Humphreys, A.R. ed. *The First Part of King Henry IV*. London: Methuen, 1960.

----- *The Second Part of King Henry IV*. London: Methuen, 1966.

Lott, B. ed. *Macbeth*. London: Longman, 1965.

Maxwell, J.C. ed. *Titus Andronicus*. London: Methuen, 1984.

Muir, K. ed. *King Lear*. London: Methuen, 1966.

be content to repeat vague concepts and lies as no effort was made to seek for information about Islam and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) from an authentic source. "No effort was put forth to make even the idea of Islam seem interesting", as Edward Said has observed (302) . The distorted image of Mohammad (PBUH) and his followers remained essentially unchanged. In Shakespeare's England Mohammed was still believed the heretic and false prophet, author of a religion based on deceit. It is quite obvious that both Shakespeare and Marlowe, the greatest and most recognizable of all English dramatists whose works are read and studied everywhere in the world, were completely misguided by inherited misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

It is very important, at this point, to recall that much of the recent discussion of Islam in the West is afflicted with the inherited stereotypical prejudiced conception that creates hostile responses. Moreover, there is a strong disposition in the West to perceive Islam as disposed towards violence and extremism. It is, then, the duty of every knowledgeable Muslim scholar in general and Al-Azhar - as the largest Islamic institution in the world - in particular to exert all effort to make clear the reality of Islam and to reassure the people in the West that Islam is not a militant religion as they often claim. It must be made clear to the whole world that Islam is the religion of peace and equality, most significantly here, it is the religion of tolerance as Islam bears no hostility or prejudice against any other religion or race. This fact is asserted in the Qur'an :

يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثي وجعلناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم. صدق الله العظيم (سورة الحجرات : آية 13)

" O people, We have created you of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other . Truly, the most honoured in the sight of Allah is the most righteous." (Sura 49: 13) .

Marlowe reinforces the humiliation of these captive kings by making them draw Tamburlaine's chariot; his son Amyras wants to be similarly drawn by these "idle kings" (*Tamburlaine* 2, IV. Iii. 27-8).

It is quite notable that Tamburlaine's career of conquest is extremely acceptable by the dramatist. Tamburlaine's son Calyphas refuses to be another Tamburlaine, and rejects his father's values. However, as regards the dramatic design as a whole, Marlowe seems to accept Tamburlaine's destructive ambitions and not Calyphas's point of view. As far as the total action of the play is concerned, it is Tamburlaine's and not Calyphas's values which emerge triumphant. This is clear in portraying Calyphas as an unworthy son, cowardly and unfit to succeed his father; and finally killed ignominiously (*Tamburlaine* 2, IV. i). Tamburlaine's rigorous point of view is further enforced when Zenocrate, his wife, though trying to restrain him, still admires and encourages him as a conqueror (*Tamburlaine* 2, II. iv. 57-60). Tamburlaine's tyrannical cruelty is dramatically intensified after his wife's death, towards the end of the second part of *Tamburlaine*. He determines to destroy all Turkish kingdoms "and make the stars melt/ As if they were the tears of Mahomet/ For hot consumption of his country's pride" (IV. II. 198-200). He, thus, enjoys being victorious over Mohammad's nations even though the Prophet (PBUH) is supposed to be grieved for this.

Finally, it becomes clear that the Renaissance inherited a confused and mistaken mass of grotesque notions and prejudices concerning Islam and Muslims. This helped in building up, in the Elizabethan imagination, a distorted picture of the Muslims and their Prophet (PBUH); a picture that passed into English literature of the age and later ages. This picture persisted almost unchallenged and fortified by new prejudices against the Ottoman conquerors of Europe and the Levant. The Elizabethans seemed to



Furthermore, the same old notions that Muslims are "heathenish", "pagans" and "infidels" who "dare attempt to war with Christians" are frequently used in Marlowe's play (*Tamburlaine* 2, V. i. 6, 23, 26). Marlowe's European kings hold the conviction that Muslims, or Turks, are "infidels/ In whom no faith nor true religion rests" (*Tamburlaine* 2, II.ii.33-4). In the belief of these Christian kings, their "faiths are sound" whereas Muslims' faith is "foul blasphemous paganism" (*Tamburlaine* 2, II.i. 47, 53).

Prejudice against the Turks, who represent Islam, has further led the dramatist to enhance Tamburlaine's power and the Sultan's humiliation. The Sultan is shown insolently boastful before the battle and impotently raging when a prisoner. Moreover, Marlowe manipulates legendary material and Elizabethan narratives such as those of the Sultan being encaged, Tamburlaine's feeding of him with crumbs under his table, and being used as a block from which to mount his horse or as a footstool to his throne. To enhance the humiliation of Muslim kings, Tamburlaine is made to address the defeated kings of "Jerusalem, Tebizon and Sorya" in this way:

See now ye slaues, may children stoops your pride  
And leads your glories sheep-like to the sword.  
(*Tamburlaine* 2, IV. I. 78-79).

And he continues:

Bring them my boyes, and tel me if the warres  
Be not a life that may illustrate Gods,  
And tickle not your spirits with desire  
Stil to be train'd in armes and chievalry?  
(*Tamburlaine* 2, IV. I. 80-83).

heaps of superstitious books" to be burnt (*Tamburlaine* 2, V.i. 172-73); calling "Mahomet" to come down "and work a miracle":

Thou art not worthy to be worshipped  
That suffers flames of fire to burn the writ  
Wherein the sum of thy religion rests....  
Well soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell;  
He cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine:  
Seek out another godhead to adore;

(*Tamburlaine* 2, V.i. 187-89, 197-99).

Here Marlowe's prejudice against Islam reaches a climax; Tamburlaine does not only burn the Qur'an but equates it with all other superstitious books. Furthermore, he boasts that his "sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell; those who "worship Mahomet" (*Tamburlaine* 2, V. i. 178-79). It is notable that Marlowe inherited and repeated the same medieval notions and fallacies about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) being a god worshipped by the Muslims. It is ironically confusing that Marlowe makes Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) a god and at the same time God's "friend" (*Tamburlaine* 2, III. i.3). Marlowe also expresses in the above quoted speech of Tamburlaine the medieval view that Mohammad, being a heretic, is doomed to hell. It is worth noting here that this is the same view that Dante expressed in his *Inferno* where Mohammad (PBUH) is placed deep in hell with the sowers of scandal and schism, "seminatori di scandalo et di scisma" (qtd. in Chew 397).

The hostile attitude of Marlowe toward Islam and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is further quite notable when he even makes the Muslim Turkish emperor and his empress damn their Prophet when conquered by Tamburlaine; Zabina the Turkish empress says:

O cursed Mahomet, that mak'st us thus  
The slave to Scythians rude and barbarous!

(*Tamburlaine* 1, III, iii. 270-71).

humble origins to become master of the world that really interested a Renaissance dramatist, but the victor who had triumphed over the Turkish empire, the great enemy of Christendom.

Many chroniclers related the story of Tamburlaine's triumph and Bajazeth's shameful defeat<sup>2</sup>. Tamburlaine had forced the Turkish army to abandon the siege of Constantipole. In so doing, he gave the Renaissance statesmen the initiative to think of "the practicability of bringing pressure from the East upon the Turkish rear" (Chew 470). As S.C. Chew Further reports, "Western historians and moralists generally contemplate with satisfaction the downfall of the Sultan" (470). Marlowe's play is, therefore, not devoid of its author's prejudice against Islam and Muslims. Hence, Tamburlaine is annotated in the play's title as " the Great" to express the author's admiration of his conquests. In the play the European kings also express their admiration of Tamburlaine's achievement; by conquering the Turks he:

... in the fortune of their overthrow,  
We may discourage all the pagan troop  
That dare attempt to war with Christians.

*(Tamburlaine 2, II. I.23-5).*

To enhance and glorify the conquest that Tamburlaine had achieved, Marlowe, as S.C. Chew remarks, departs widely from history and legend (471). To magnify his hero's achievement, the dramatist places the conflict with the Turks in Tamburlaine's youth instead of his old age (Chew 472). Furthermore, as historians report. Tamburlaine was a devout Muslim; "some going so far to say that his long postponement of an attack upon Bajazeth was due to his reluctance to engage in warfare with a fellow-believer" (Chew 472). But Marlowe's Tamburlaine is so viciously audacious and blasphemous that he causes the " Turkish Alcaron and all the

## III

By the end of the Renaissance there was a great interest among dramatists in dealing with Muslim lands and characters, especially with the Turkish empire. The most famous of the drama that invested with romance oriental themes was Marlowe's *Tamburlaine The Great* (c. 1587). For *Tamburlaine*, the play by which he won his first and most resounding success, Marlowe took the achievements of the Tartar conqueror Timur the Lame (1336-1405), or Tamburlaine, as the theme of his play.

Marlowe had five principal sources for *Tamburlaine*. These were George Whetstone's *The English Mirror* (1585); a life of Tamburlaine published in Florence in 1553; Lonicerus's *History of the Turks*; the famous atlas by Abraham Ortelius (*Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*); and Paul Ive's *Practice of Fortification*, from which Marlowe took most of the details of military strategy (See Salgado in Trudeau 222). In real life Tamburlaine ruled Samarcand in the late fourteenth century and his vast empire was looked on with awe and admiration by the monarchs of Europe. Originally a Scythian shepherd, endowed with an aspiring mind, Tamburlaine determined to become a world potentate by military conquest. The first part of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* was so successful that a sequel was called for at once. The essentials of the plot of the two parts of *Tamburlaine* lie in the amazing series of triumphs which Tamburlaine enjoys. He achieves the summit of his triumph by his conquest of Bajazeth, the Great Turk whom he uses as his footstool and carries about in an iron cage. Bajazeth finally kills himself by dashing out his brains against the bars of the cage.

The tremendous victory of Marlowe's hero over the Turkish ruler appealed to both the dramatist and the Elizabethan audience. It was not the example of the heroic will; the man who rose from

of his dark skin and the association that this had in European minds. To Desdemona's father, Desdemona is unnatural in refusing "many proposed matches/Of her own clime, complexion, and degree" to marry someone whose looks would make her shake with fear (I. iii. 98-101).

As Norman Sanders confirms in the introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *Othello*, a "black/white opposition is clearly built into the play at every level " (4). Shakespeare could, then, rely upon the ready acceptance of his audience of the story of an exotic Moorish general fighting valiantly against the Turks, on the one hand, and what seemed natural to this audience of an insular distrust of the alien on the other. In alienating Othello and linking him vaguely with magic, with proneness to jealousy, Shakespeare emphasizes the barbarism of a Moor. The "Noble Moor" implies a villain of almost supernatural powers, and , as Ania Loomba points out, Othello "moves from being a colonized subject existing on the terms of the white Venetian society and trying to internalize its ideology, towards being marginalised, outcast and alienated from it in every way, until he occupies his 'true' position as its other " ( in Barthelemy 171).

It is finally clear that Shakespeare's attitude to Islam and the Other, or the Orient, represented in the play by the Moor resembles that of many other European writers whom Edward Said has called "Christian polemicists against Islam" (71). All such writers, as Edward Said puts it, from Dante to Shakespeare, represent the Orient and Islam "as outsiders having a special role to play inside Europe" (71).

stabbing the "malignant" Turk within himself, Othello restores his "fair" public name and sees himself as both the heroic defender of the state and the "infidel" Turk who must be destroyed.

Undoubtedly, Shakespeare meant to picture Othello as a black Moor. However, in *Othello* the dramatist made significant departures from both other representations of blacks on the Renaissance stage and his own earlier portrait of a Moor. Blacks were often stereotyped as villains; Shakespeare himself had employed this figure in Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. With the presentation of Othello as a proud, virtuous soldier, Shakespeare defies many of these stereotypes. Shakespeare's intention was to make of Othello a particular Christianized Moor who is called on to rescue Cyprus from the Turks. As a Christian general, Othello's business is mainly to cry "keep up your bright swords" in the streets of Venice, to rescue the Venetian Cyprus from Turkish aggression. We might then take one line of action in the play to be the militant Christian's quest for the Turk. Finally, Othello is declared "far more fair than black" (1.iii. 285) and his identity as Venice's Christian saviour seems confirmed. However, Othello, like Aaron, is aware of colour differences for he describes himself as "begrim'd black". Moreover, several characters display racist attitudes and clearly designate Othello as black. This discrimination is most notable in Iago, who not only expresses his own racism but plays on the prejudices of others in his schemes against Othello. Hence, while rejecting stereotypes in his depiction of Othello, Shakespeare also presents characters who attack the hero's colour and use his race to isolate and destroy him.

Thus, being a Moor and a fairly newcomer in Venice Othello allowed Shakespeare to grapple with an emerging social problem in a multi-racial society; the problem of cultural tension and assimilation. Despite Othello's self-identification with Venice and Christianity, he as a Moor could not shake his being the by-product

and the binding forces that hold it together. Hence, the movement expressed in geographical and social symbols from Venice to a Cyprus exposed to the attack of the Turks, is suggestive of a movement from Christendom to the domain of the Turks, from the City to barbarism, from justice to wild murder and revenge, from truth to falsehood. Shakespeare binds these levels together by the use of imagery that compares things on one level of action with things on another. For example, when Iago swears that his low judgment of all women's virtue, "is true or else I am a Turk" (II, i. 114), logic demands that the audience accounts him "a Turk" since one woman, Desdemona, is true and chaste. Iago is thus identified with the infidels, the unbelievers or the Ottoman Turks who for centuries threatened Christendom. The Turkish power is thus shown to have its psychological equivalent in Iago's diabolical attitude toward life. Similarly, when Othello sees the drunken brawl on the watchtower, he exclaims:

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that  
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?  
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl !  
(II. iii. 169-71)

Hence, the two worlds seem totally different, the Christian characterized by reason and self-control; the pagan (or the Turk), as Shakespeare seems to emphasize, by "barbarous" inarticulateness and disorder.

Towards the end of the play, Othello, convinced of Desdemona's guilt, smothers her in bed. Most important here is Othello's identification of himself as the "base Judean", that is the barbarian who picks up a pearl and throws it away not knowing its worth. A few lines further he speaks of a "malignant and a turbaned Turk" who "Beat a Venetian and traduced the state" (v. ii 343, 349-50) and he then acknowledges that he is that Turk. By

Prejudice against Turks or Muslims reached a climax in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Shakespeare's choice of a black hero for his tragedy, as Ruth Cowhig suggests, must have been deliberate (8). His direct source was an Italian tale: Geraldini Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565); he followed this tale in using love between a Moor and a young Venetian girl of high birth, and little more, as the basis of his plot (see Kernan 171-86). The action of the play takes place in a period between the 1480s and the fall of Rhodes in the hands of the Turks in 1523. The outer limits of the world of the play are represented by the Turks, "the infidels", and "the general enemy" (I. iii. 48 ) as the play calls them, who sail back and forth trying to trick the Christians in order to invade their land. Their domain, as reported by Othello, is that of "anters vast and deserts idle" (I. iii. 138). We are further informed that out there is a land of "rough quarries" inhabited by "cannibals that each other eat" and monstrous forms of men "whose heads grow beneath their shoulders" (I.iii. 139,142-43). In the war Othello is seen to be leading the forces of Christendom against the Turks who threaten Venice by attacking Cyprus.

The movement in *Othello* is from Venice to Cyprus; from organized society to a condition much closer to raw nature ( Kernan xxvi ) . In this organized society or the City, there is only one man to control violence and defend civilization, the Moor Othello, himself of barbarous origins and a converted Christian<sup>1</sup>. "This passage from Venice to Cyprus to fight the Turk and encounter the forces of barbarism", as Alvin Kernan further points out in the introduction to the Signet Classic edition of *Othello*, " is the geographical form of an action that occurs on the social and geographical levels as well"(xxvii). That is, there are forces at work in society and in man that correspond to the Turks; their raging seas, and "cannibals that each other eat". On the other hand, Venice and Cyprus stand for the City that embodies order, reason, justice



finally makes him find some 'consolation before death, that the chamber in which he is dying is called "Jerusalem Chamber". It is here significant to note that Shakespeare's portrait of Henry IV as a crusader echoes with much accuracy fourteenth century attitudes and may suggest that the crusade provided for the late sixteenth century a theme, which was quite understood.

Apart from the crusading issue, the popular English, and western, notion of the treachery of the Turks was represented by Shakespeare to reveal an inherent anti-Islamic attitude and conviction. To Shakespeare the word Turk almost invariably suggested images of lustfulness and cruelty. Hence, "in woman out-paramour'd the Turk", says Edgar in *King Lear* (III. iv.91). Henry V, in ascending the throne, assures his fearful nobles: "This is the English throne, not the Turkish court" (*Henry IV* part 2, V. ii.47). Elsewhere in Shakespeare the exclamation "What? Think you we are Turks or infidels?" is equivalent to an assurance that no one will be executed without cause (*Richard III*, III. v. 40). When war threatens, it is said paradoxically "Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels" (*Richard II*. IV. I. 139). In *Othello* Iago is made to assure the truth of what he says: "It is true or else I am a Turk" (II, i. 114). In *Macbeth* the Witch threw into the cauldron a "nose of Turk", (IV. i. 29) an image which suggested that of a monstrous visage. In general, the word "Turk" which often symbolized Islam and Muslims, is not only a term of reproach among Elizabethans but it is also a belittling form; "a Turk of tenpence" as in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (IV. iv. 258).

The expression "To turn Turk" is very commonly used in Elizabethan England as a degrading expression. Hamlet uses it metaphorically: "If the rest of my fortunes turn Turk" (III.ii.261-62) that is, if my fortunes prove false. In *Much Ado About Nothing* the phrase "... an you be not turn'd Turk" (III. iv. 56) has the special meaning to become a prostitute.

dominant spiritual exercise still littered the Elizabethan stage. Shakespeare showed interest in the crusading issue as early as 1597, the date of the composition of his *Henry IV* Part 1. The historical action of the play begins in 1402 and it opens with King Henry who plans for a crusade to the Holy Land. King Henry is made here to say that he is going to lead the crusade to "chase these pagans in those holy fields" (I.i.24). Henry's intention of this pilgrimage is even made by Shakespeare to begin earlier, just after the death of King Richard II whom Henry IV dethroned in 1399:

I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land.

To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.

(*Richard II* (c.1595), V. vi. 49-50).

The crusade in the mind of the dramatist was still a clearly defined, easily recognizable path of salvation. Hence, Henry IV was urging his courtiers:

... To the sepulture of Christ

Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross

We are impressed and engag'd to fight.

(*Henry IV* Part 2, I. i. 19-21)

He again declares his intention "to lead many to the Holy Land." (*Henry IV* Part 2, IV. V.210). Thus Shakespeare builds his picture of Henry IV's preoccupation with the Holy Land in order to be purged of his sin of usurpation. Throughout the action of the two parts of *Henry IV* Shakespeare makes King Henry frequently recall the idea of pilgrimage as the only method through which he might wash himself of his guilt. But the troubles at home hinder his journey and Shakespeare depicts his disappointment at his failures. This desire of a crusade moves from a weary longing at the beginning of *Henry IV* Part 1 (I. i. 19-29), to a despairing hope when he is sick to death in Part 2 (III. I. 107-108). The dramatist

ugly, devoid of true civilization, and the followers of Islam were children of the night and the devil" (179).

It finally becomes clear how Islam and Christianity confronted each other as enemies during the Crusades and afterwards. As the Crusades continued Muslims were considered infidels or pagans. The distorted image of Islam and Muslims handed down by the Middle Ages continued into the period of the Renaissance and beyond. It has even survived until today, as many people in the West are still imprisoned by the "stereotypes" of an earlier age. It is here worth quoting what a contemporary American convert to Islam has remarked:

Islam is so little known and understood in the Western World that to many people, especially in America, it is simply another strange religious cult or sect, Allah is some sort of a heathen deity, Muhammad is someone who is worshipped by hordes of pagans overseas, and Muslims are either militant sword-wielding bedouins mounted on camels, fanatical men of religion with long robes and beards, or rich decadent playboys. Indeed, Islam has been so gravely misunderstood and misrepresented in the West that many people in America and Europe think of it as an enemy to any sort of stability, peace and progress.( Haneef viii) .

Hence, the image of Islam and Muslims as perceived by Medieval Europe has survived and penetrated contemporary western thought and conviction.

## ii

In spite of the fact that the reality of the crusading for Englishmen had withered amidst the shifting spiritual, social, and political winds of the sixteenth century, the debris of a once

concern is displayed in Elizabethan drama such as Shakespeare's *Othello* (c.1605) and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (c.1587).

Leaving the Turks, it remains to have a look at the opposite side of the Islamic world; the Barbary or Moorish states. The Moors were, to Elizabethan England and Europe, the dwellers in the zone that extended in North Africa from the Atlantic to the western borders of Egypt. The extensive contacts in trade and diplomacy with the Muslim Moors formed part of the European tradition especially between England and Morocco in the sixteenth century. However, that period was characterized by the prevalence of Moorish piracy. Traditions of the conflict between the Christians and Muslims in Spain, of the "Sarazens whych vext the Spanyards sore" (John Bale, *King Johan* 1.1301 qtd. in Chew 518) were revitalized during that period. Like the Turk, the Moor as a Muslim represented threat and an alien culture to Christian Europe in general and England in particular. As S.C. Chew remarks, "From Spanish hatred of the Moors, reinforced by the general Christian hatred of Mohammadans and by experiences of piratical depredations came the Elizabethan emphasis upon the cruelty of these people - and upon their blackness" (521). As an opposite in race, religion and culture, the Moor was used by Western writers to confirm the superiority of the western values and also to provide an opportunity to reveal the opposition between Christianity and Islam. The Moor represented the dark, uncivilized and savage barbarian in contrast to fair western civilization. The theatrical representation of the Moor as devil is very clear in Shakespeare's characterization of Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. The negative image of the Moor as barbarian, devil, or infidel, as Jack D'Amico states, is mainly the outcome of the Christian tradition in which "deviation from the European norm, whether in appearance, custom or religion, signaled degeneration or sin" (179). Hence, as Jack D'Amico further expounds "the descendants of Cham were black,

and for the Christian hierarchy it represented both a spiritual and political threat. The Europeans continued to be exercised by the Islamic threat. The frontier of Christendom in the sixteenth century, thus, ran up the Adriatic and across central Europe. Hungary was lost in 1526. Vienna was besieged in 1529, its survival was of considerable significance to the subsequent course of events in the sixteenth century Europe. In the Mediterranean, Rhodes fell in 1522-23, and Cyprus fell in 1571. The Ottomans were also threatening to dominate the whole of the Mediterranean and hence the Levant trade, in addition to maintaining their firm hold on the middle and lower Danube. Even England felt the alarm of the Ottoman advance. Faced with the Ottoman threat, western Europe possessed one unified weapon of defense and counterattack against the enemy: the crusade.

As Jack D'Amico points out, Islamic culture "surrounded Christian Europe and stood between the Church and the yet-to-be - converted East, and Islamic rulers held the Christian holy lands" (76). Islam had, then, to be represented as a dangerous distortion of the Church, a parody of civilization, its book a collection of lies and its Prophet an impostor. With the spread of Islam and the growth of the political power of the Turks, Muslims became an aggressive threat, a frightening spiritual and political counter-force to European Christianity. Fear of the Turks and anxiety about their aggression caused a hostile attitude to be maintained, and the Turk was looked upon as "a monster of iniquity" (Smith 15) and became synonymous with the "Anti-Christ" (Tyerman 369).

In terms of religious confrontation, the word "Turk" meant Muslim, and wars against Turks literally meant wars against Islam. Looking at the sixteenth century England in particular, the England of Shakespeare and Marlowe, there was, in C. Tyerman words, "some concern and interest in fighting the infidel and in the general problem of the advancing Turks" (344-45). As will be shown, this

chivalry. The duels in which the two parties are engaged are portrayed in such a way to enhance the superiority of the crusader over the Muslim fighter. That crusader, as Chaucer relates, "fought for our faith" against "heathen" in the Holy Land and many other Muslim countries (Chaucer 2-3).

The tradition of the "idol Mahomet" and of the "pagan" Muslims survived into Elizabethan times. Fulke Greville, a scholar notably attracted to the manners and thoughts of the East, wrote:

Mahomet himself an idol makes,  
And draws mankind to Mecha for his sake.

(*A Treatise of Monarchy* qtd. In Chew 395)

Thus, the Prophet who denounced and forbade the worship of idols and preached that there is no God but God, the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe, became either a god or an idol. The concept of Mohammad as god did not cease with the Middle Ages; it persisted through the middle of the seventeenth century literature, which, in B.P. Smith's words, occasionally represents Muslims as "praying to their God Mahomet" (4). The misguided conception of Islam is further revealed in the western tradition of regarding Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as the "Founder of Islam" (Chew 387) and thus calling Islam "Mohammadanism" and a Muslim a "Mohammadan".

The Western prejudice against Islam and Muslims was intensified by the ever-present fears of the growing power of the Turkish empire during the sixteenth century. The grotesque legends and fallacies that passed in Shakespeare's England about Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) which so long-lived as prejudices were later fortified by new prejudices against the Turks or the Ottoman conquerors of Europe and the Levant. During the Renaissance, Islam was the single most dangerous menace in the known world,

The religious and national zeal that stimulated efforts to secure the Holy Land or fight other enemies of the church far from home was, then, the essential goal of a crusader. The conception of Christianity as the one universal religion, opposed only by barbarous paganism - destined soon to be either converted or destroyed - carried with it the conviction that any religion after Christianity must necessarily be nothing other than a bastard and treacherous offshoot from the true religion. Edward Said sums up the Western view about the Muslims and their Prophet:

... we find it commonly believed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Arabia was "on the fringe of the Christian world, a natural asylum for heretical outlaws" and that Mohammad was a cunning apostate, whereas in the twentieth century an Orientalist scholar, an erudite specialist, will be the one to point out how Islam is really no more than second-order Arian heresy. (62-3)

As the crusades continued, Muslims were looked upon by medieval Christendom as infidels and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was believed to be an idol or false god or else a heretic. In addition to this misconception, some very offensive legendary beliefs grew about the Prophet's character and career.

Hence, in medieval epic poetry Muslims, despite the fact that Islam is the religion of *Tawheed* or belief in one Almighty God, "are often described as pagans" (Gunny I). As B.P. Smith reports, the surviving forms of the mystery plays which date from the fifteenth century reveal much "the same concept of the god Mahomet as do the romances" (2). A glaring example of the prejudiced approach towards Muslims is to be found in J. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* specifically in "The Knight's Tale". In this tale Chaucer (1340 ?-1400) gives a picture in miniature of the Christian-Muslim encounter emphasizing the so-called crusader's

However, Englishmen still took the cross in the late fifteenth century; the Tudor monarchs still found zeal in the emotional and spiritual resonance of the crusade.

In the late sixteenth century the crusade ceased to occupy an important place in English life as that period possessed its own features of religious and political reordering of social values during the Reformation. In that period Spanish recruits to the Armada in 1588 were offered crusade privileges granted to crusaders to the Holy Land. In England and Europe, the crusade was, however, mainly characteristic of the religion of medieval Catholicism, which derived its strength from the church and the aspirations of the faithful. By 1600, as C. Tyerman reports, "the concerns of the faithful were being articulated in a different idiom, one alien to the crusade" (5).

Nevertheless, England was specifically marked by the crusade experience. Hence some of its well-known historical moments occurred on crusade; most famously Richard I directing operations from his sickbed at Acre on the Third Crusade (1187). The crusade appeared in numerous late medieval folktales and legends, such as the stories of Robin Hood. The memory of the crusading military operations left a trace not only on the literary and public records of medieval England but on the English language. As a synonym for a just cause vigorously pushed, the term "crusade" has been widely adopted in the English-speaking world to apply to a variety of issues: military, as in Eisenhower's war memoir *Crusade in Europe*; social, as in Thomas Jefferson's in 1786 for a "crusade against ignorance"; both religious and political - as many Muslims would have perceived it - as in J.W. Bush's "crusade against terrorism" after September 2001 attack on America.



Middle Ages to trace the cultural and historical factors that moulded the western man's misconception of Islam and Muslims, a misconception which is even today hardly extinct. This task would help in revealing how far culture and inherited misconception affected both Shakespeare and Marlowe in their representation of Islam and Muslims.

In the Middle Ages, a completely different picture of Islam emerged in Europe. During the Crusades (1095-1588) Islam was perceived as the arch-enemy of Christendom. As a religious institution the crusade was a particular form of war justified by the Pope as being holy and associated, initially by the Pope Urban II in 1095, with the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As a pilgrimage-in-arms the crusade had Jerusalem as its essential goal. The crusader wore on his garment a cloth cross and hence became, like the pilgrim, immune from various secular liabilities. Such was the standard practice as it had developed by 1200. It is important, at this point, to note that the third campaign (1187) - in which the army of Jerusalem was annihilated by Saladin at Hattin - focused much attention on Islam and generated a great deal of hatred and hostility among Europeans against Islam and the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

The later Middle Ages witnessed a potentially more significant development in the crusading process. The emotions that inspired the crusader were to become in many ways equivalent to those that encouraged the national warrior. Hence, it was a

duty to a righteous and respectable cause sanctified by lay authority and the church against an enemy characterized as being hostile to the cherished and familiar community of the national or religious faithful (the paradigm of the twelfth-century "Saracen" or the twentieth-century "Hun").

(Tryeman 4)

**Image of Islam and Muslims in the Drama of  
William Shakespeare and  
Christopher Marlowe**

**Dr. Bothaina Ahmed Abou El-Magd**

Assistant Professor of English Literature

Al-Azhar University

**I**

- The European encounter with the Orient, and specifically with Islam, strengthened this system of representing the Orient and, as has been suggested by Henri Pirenne, turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded. (Said 70)

As this symposium is primarily concerned with the idea of clearing the image of Islam in the West of any misconceptions, this paper attempts to examine some representative works of English literature, mainly Shakespeare's *Othello* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, to show how Islam and Muslims are represented in these works. The objective is to expose some groundless conceptions and prejudices against Islam and Muslims.

Responses to Islam in the West have been going on for more than thirteen hundred years and will no doubt continue. Recently, the attack on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 and the events that followed, specifically the war waged by America against what it called terrorism led to the current discourse in the West about Islam. This discourse mostly centres upon ethnocentric thoughts set by race, religion and culture. Such an encounter between Islam and the West would take us back to the